

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University
Ohio Mining Journal

Title: First Furnaces in America

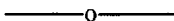
Creators: [Whittlesey, Charles, 1808-1886](#)

Issue Date: 15-Feb-1887

Citation: Ohio Mining Journal, vol. 5, no. 2 (February 15, 1887), 21-22.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/32467>

Appears in Collections: [Ohio Mining Journal: Volume 5, no. 2 \(February 15, 1887\)](#)



FIRST FURNACES IN AMERICA.

BY CHARLES WHITTLESY.

In a note to Swinton's "Army of the Potomac," page 428, there is an interesting historical account of the furnaces near Germansford. of Virginia in the mysteries of working iron. He claimed to be the first in North America who had erected a regular furnace.

"The mines of this region (Mine Run and the Wilderness) were worked in the early part of the last century by Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Virginia." Col. In the "Present State of Virginia," Hugh Jones (1724) refers to Spotswood's town of Germans sent over by Queen Anne.

Boyd, in 1732, published an account of the region which is now known only as a place in history. In no works I have been able to consult, is the kind of ore, the product of these mines, or their geological association described. This information has been courteously furnished in a letter from Prof. Wm. M. Swinton, of the University of Virginia, near Charlottsville.

He says this famous town of Germansford consists of Col. Spotswood's enchanted castle on one side of the street and a baker's dozen of ruinous tenements on the other, where so many German families dwelt some years since but have removed ten miles higher in the fork of the Rappahannock, to land of their own." The noble colonel coming home in the evening Col. Boyd informed him that he came to be instructed by the Governor of Germansford as well as that near Chancellorsville, used a brown hematite iron ore due to the oxidation on the outcrops of iron pyrites. This region is in the gold belt of Virginia, which contains locally large masses of pyrites in the form of lenticular pockets. These from the

surface for some distance down, are changed to brown hematite. The associated rocks are mica slate, hydro-mica slates, which pass into mica schists."

The large tracts from which timber was cut to furnish charcoal for the works, now form the wilderness where the two armies fought in May, 1864. Probably the river was used for transportation as far as it was navigable by boats. As the mines deepened the ores would be charged with sulphur.
